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Your Miracle Power

Mayan Revelation Number 172

The Practice of Faith

Prayer

The Supreme Test

The Starting Point

Stimulation

Build on What You Believe

Harmony

Bible Study

Materialism

Beloved Centurion:

In your last lesson we talked about what FAITH is. In this lesson we will study a very closely allied subject, the PRACTICE OF FAITH. Although these two subjects are closely affiliated, they are not the same; they are entirely different.

We are endeavoring to cover the subject of faith in all its facets. It is vast in its scope; we could write reams on the subject and never cover all that could or should be said, for until we understand Faith, what it is, how to attain it, how to put it into practice, how to develop it and make it grow strong, we can never really master life.

Life is a great adventure, some of it filled with joy and a great deal of it filled with pain. We suffer losses and heartaches, we experience gains and happiness. Sometimes in our life we have an abundance, and at other times we lose much.

It is during the sorrowful and losing periods of our lives that we need to have faith that every misfortune that befalls us will soon be put right and that all good will prevail. This is not always easy to do. Sometimes it is almost impossible and we are filled with despair.

A lady called me in my private office on the telephone the other day. She had reached the end of her rope; she didn't know which way to turn, but she had not completely given up hope. A spark of faith remained and it was this little spark of faith which she fanned into a flame which made her know she could surmount her problems. As she said "goodbye" over the telephone I was able to hear a great change in her voice. Her faith was strengthened and renewed and she was happy; so was I. Her faith had been present all the time but she had not been using it. She had allowed it to become dormant. We should use our faith every day, if not for ourselves, for others.

The ability to have faith is not withheld from some and given to others. We all are capable of developing our faith and it can make life great.

It is because your instructors know without question that the practice of faith can bring you to new heights that we present your MIRACLE POWER SERIES. So now, let us proceed with more study of this fascinating and useful phase of your spiritual unfoldment. But first, our prayer:

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, show me how to have faith; but
show me also how to keep it alive and growing
through constant exercise and use.

Amen.

THE SUPREME TEST:

The theme of this lesson is that in the final analysis we learn, keep, and improve a power by using it, by having experience with it. That applies to faith as well as to anything else.

So we shall now discuss several phases of the use of faith and finding by experience what it is and what it will do. We have long used some things - electricity for instance - without really knowing what they are; but at least we still continue to use them, to find more and better uses for them, and to use them more and more effectively.

In the preceding lesson we have set forth several definitions of faith and some symbols that at least suggest its nature and use. It may be that as you have considered it from these various angles you have come to feel that at least you have developed a fairly good idea of it. If that is the case, well and good, for you can go on from that point to a greater and deeper understanding of this power so mysterious and yet so real.

On the other hand, you may not have seen the nature of faith with satisfactory clearness. It may even be that the preceding sevenfold definition of it has only confused you more than ever. In such a case let us hope you did not decide to give up the project and make no further effort. Never do that with regard to this or any other important thing. You never know what day or hour you will hear, see, read, or experience something that will give you more light and greater understanding.

Possibly you have said to yourself that you must make further and deeper studies of the subject till you do understand it. That is not what you need at this point. You have already covered the subject in a general, theoretical way. What you need now is experience. When you have had that you can come back to these and other explanations and understand them better. What is more, you will have then learned things about it they do not even suggest.

This will be what is called the pragmatic or practice test. It is the process of learning what a thing is by finding out what it does. Its basis is the idea that if a thing produces effects it exists, that if it is true it will work, and its nature is indicated by what it does and how it does it. Men do not gather grapes from thorns nor figs from thistles, as the Master said. There may be ways of proving faith by Logic, but the acid test is whether it will work.

This test has been the crucial one for all the great discoveries and inventions of the past. The public was waiting to jeer about the failure of Fulton's steamboat, Pasteur's hydrophobia vaccine, and other discoveries; but one thing the mockers could not get past - they worked.

At this point, then, let definitions wait. Try faith out till you see for yourself what it amounts to. For the present just disregard other definitions, and start with the idea of confidence.

THE STARTING POINT:

This is the formula reduced to its lowest and simplest terms, then - start with confidence and follow through. That is the least you can do and the least with which you can do. But your confidence will need to be thoroughgoing. Faith is no half-way affair.

The first and main thing, of course, is to have confidence in God, and not the weak and partial variety but complete confidence that He is all good, all wise, all powerful, and that He cares personally about you. Try to learn this from what He has done, but if you cannot do so, then assume it for test purposes. But you will find that confidence in God implies and involves certain other necessary confidences. In other words, it has its by-products. Let us think of some of them:

One is confidence in yourself. As you realize that God is working with you and you with Him you will understand increasingly that this constitutes an invincible combination. You will find yourself saying with St. Paul, "I can do all things through God who strengthens me."

The human and the divine together build up a maximum of power, like the two poles of a battery. When you have worked with God for awhile the old negative concept of yourself disappears, and you find in its place the realization that you have a real place to fill and that you can fill it. That is what makes the people with a mission, who build the progress of the world.

Another of these by-products will be confidence in others. The person who does not respect the human race and those who compose it does not get on well. Jesus taught us not to get a cynical attitude and brush others off as foolish or unimportant. Faith in God somehow produces faith in the worth of others. Jesus made many a person good by respecting him for what he could be rather than for what he was.

Another product of confidence in God is confidence in life. The person who expects of life only trouble and unhappiness, hindrance and failure, is seldom disappointed. Life seems to say, as people sometimes do, "Well, if that is what you think I am, that is what I will be." The point should be clear, of course, that the principle will work either way. Think well of life and it will do well by you.

Another by-product of confidence in God is confidence in the future. You will see and repeatedly prove that tomorrow is not your enemy but your friend. Have you not noticed that animals most readily attack those who are afraid of them, that the forces of nature are most unkind to those who act shrinkingly toward them, and that even people are most likely to be unkind toward those whose attitudes invite hostility? It is the same with the future. If you believe in God you will meet it with confidence and hope.

So, whether you feel you have mastered the subject or not, just start with confidence in God and follow through. You would do well with it even if you never learned any more, but you will learn more, - much more.

STIMULATION:

We are now to consider a wonderful principle and process. The race has developed and continues to do so because it has learned how. But how did it learn how? By experimentation, trying, doing what it could and thereby learning how to do more.

A little one-celled creature in the water goes through the process of living in a simple way by trying. The tiny but more developed organism does the same. It wriggles and squirms, and thus discovers that it can swim or crawl. Other processes are discovered the same way. They are accidental. No one teaches them to the living creature. It simply does what it finds it is capable of doing, and as a result by doing what it is capable of doing, it finds that this leads to the discovery of more complex and important things it can do. It increases the extent and effectiveness of these as it learns confidence.

This is also true of faith and all its works. After all, we have to do all the great things of life by having confidence in them and our power to do them. We may even have to learn that confidence by first assuming it and acting as though we had it. The little wriggling organism acts as though it were swimming, and behold, it swims.

Here is the principle as applied to faith. Assume it, and the assumption will keep leading you in its direction. Act as though you had it, and one day you will discover that it is yours.

A young minister was much concerned about faith. He was convinced of two things - that he did not have it and that he must have it or change his calling. He was in despair. He met a man who seemed to have faith, and asked him for the secret. "Preach faith till you have it," was the reply, "and then because you have it you will preach it." He tried the plan, and the day came when he stood among the giants of faith.

For those not in the ministry the formula would be a little different, but even better. To them one would have to say, "Live faith till you have it, and then because you have it, you will live it." That brings faith down to the most important level and the one most easily and quickly reached, - that of common everyday living. It is there that the real demonstration must take place anyway.

"I grew up religiously," says one, "but faith was a name and not an experience to me. I joined the church because I believed in what it taught. I wanted to live that kind of a life, but I felt no real sense of faith and produced no real evidences of its power.

"As time went on, I met situations in which I had to depend on God, for I had nothing else on which to depend. Suddenly I discovered that I had found faith, - profound, vital, and sufficient. I had been forced to depend on it, for it was the one life line within my reach; and using it I made it mine."

That is what is meant by learning about faith through experience. Make and

keep a place in your life for it, and one day you will discover that it has moved into that place. By doing what you can you will move on to doing things you never thought you could.

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BUILD ON WHAT YOU BELIEVE:

We have said that faith is an advanced form of confidence, and confidence is an advanced form of belief. We have confidence in those whom and that which we truly believe. The foundation on which we must build, then, is belief.

What do you truly believe? That is where we must start. It is something. Everyone has to believe something, or else he could not think, reason, or operate at all. What he believes may be little, or important, or even untrue, but it is something, and whatever it is, it is his creed.

What is yours, as of today? You may not have thought about it, but you have it. You may not have known it, but it is there. The first thing to do is to uncover it, see what it is that you believe, and look it over. See if it tallies with what you know, and what others believe whose opinions you respect, the generally accepted teachings of religion, and the experience of mankind, especially of those who have walked with God.

There may be little left of it when you are through weighing it, but take that little for a foundation on which to build a set of beliefs that will be the beginning of a faith. If nothing of the old alleged beliefs is left, then build on a new foundation altogether.

Never build any fences around your beliefs. That is what makes for narrowness, dogmatism, and bigotry. Leave your beliefs room to grow, and let them do so. If they are healthy, and if you use them well, they will develop as you get more light thrown on them and have more experience by which to measure and test them. This constant testing will leave them always truer, and the experience itself will so keep adding to them that they will expand and grow stronger all the time.

Do not see how little you can find reason to believe, but how much. There is nothing to be gained by requiring more proof in the spiritual realm than we do in the physical one. Some of the people who boast that they do not believe what others do of spiritual things are so credulous in ordinary matters that they are always being deceived. Do not be like them. Their minds and their inner lives are poor, and starved, and weak. Their lives are not rich and satisfying because they do not have the faith with which to make them so.

Let your fellowship with God grow into friendship. Friends are people who through experience with each other have let their acquaintance gather enough mutual confidence or faith to make their friendship one of trust. One person never fully understands and rightly regards another, even if that other one is God, until this stage has been reached. We see clearly only when we look through the eyes of

faith and love.

Treasure your beliefs. However small or few they may be, they are the first stones in the paving of your road to wisdom and power. You will build better as you go along, and the road rightly taken and followed will lead to all that faith can be, and have, and attain.

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HARMONY:

A tone of exactly the right pitch can set up vibrations that will shatter a glass in another part of the room. We never know all the vibration sounds set up or what they do, and where.

A tone of the exact pitch to which a string on an instrument is tuned some distance away will produce an answering note from that string.

Radio reception is produced by coils tuned to the exact vibration of waves passing through the air, silent and unseen till they find that which is harmonized to them. We never know how many such forces are moving about us or what they do.

It is believed by some scholars that the vast stones in the pyramids of Egypt may have been moved from quarries far away and hoisted to the extremely exact positions they occupy by means of sound. The idea is that tones may have been produced harmonizing exactly with their substance, shape, and size, as bottles filled to a certain level with water produce certain tones, and that these sounds may have caused these great, heavy objects to move at will.

All through the constitution of nature as far as we yet know it we find vibration operating, with harmony producing positive effects and discord producing negative ones. Harmony in the operation of the parts of a machine make it work effectively, and when the parts do not operate harmoniously the machine fails and may be ruined unless the harmony is restored. Harmony between and among people enables them to produce amazing results through cooperation. Lack of it leads to every destructive result from broken homes to wrecked civilizations.

Harmony exists or may exist between a human being and the universe and between a human being and God, if there is really any difference between the two things, since the universe proceeds from the thought and power of God.

Probably the visible universe was created by building up first the pattern then charging it with vibrations of energy, harmonious within themselves and among themselves, and is maintained by keeping them in operation. These harmonies by which things and our own lives go on are either physical or spiritual in nature. That is, they compose a universe with both physical and spiritual aspects, a vast organization working to the good of everyone who keeps in harmony with it and to the detriment of everyone who does not.

No doubt you have noticed that at times when you are with another person or in a group it becomes as though you were one in thought, spirit, and purpose, while at other times it is not so. When that spirit of oneness occurs and two or more minds begin working together, you are said to be en rapport or, in full harmony.

Great power is generated in such a situation and great events have risen from it. An example is the Day of Pentecost as reported in the Second Chapter of the Book of Acts. The whole Christian movement was empowered when a group of like-minded people were "with one accord in one place".

Think carefully about this wonderful relation which is possible between yourself and God. In perfect harmony, that is in the same vibration of thought and will, anything is possible. That is faith at its best. Work to attain it, and so maintain it by use.

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BIBLE STUDY:

There is, of course, much to be learned about faith from other books, and from the lives of people who have had faith and demonstrated it in important ways; but the great text book of faith is the Bible. That is the first and last place to go to learn about the subject in an undiluted and unadulterated way. In the next lesson we shall take up some of the outstanding Bible teachings about faith, but that will be only touching the high points, so let us here take time to emphasize the habit of faith study in the Bible in general.

The Bible is many things in general, and three in particular. In each of those three particular things faith runs through its pages like a water mark.

First, the Bible is a compiled history of the divine idea, the concept of God and His workings in human history. It begins in the first dim days of the beginning of creation, and traces the development of that idea and its effect on the life of mankind up and through the present stage of development, and on to the final climax of history in the dawn of the age of righteousness and good will. Read the Bible through from that viewpoint, and you will see Faith impelling human development and guiding mankind on to this great destiny.

Second, the Bible is a panorama of man in all his relationships to God, intelligent and unintelligent, right and wrong, successful and unsuccessful. In this series of pictures are all the great saints and sinners with all their deeds and their consequences. Here is faith sun-crowned in happy situations, and there is the dark and troubled hour of those who have tried to get along without it.

Third, the Bible is the supreme text-book of life. It is the one clear and lasting voice on matters of conduct, character, and destiny. In one way its pronouncement is the same on each of them - the necessity of walking by faith. Its authors all knew that this life cannot be lived altogether by our own abilities,

that we cannot always walk by sight and so must learn to walk by faith.

Search these things all out in your own Bible. Read it from each of these viewpoints. Watch the part faith plays in the onward and upward progress of mankind. Meditate on the difference it would make in this story if the faith element were not present in it.

Set aside time in your Bible reading for a survey of faith in the Bible. Take a good concordance and turn to the word faith. Then, one by one, turn to and read each of the citations all the way through. Do not take more than one or two at a time, but examine carefully those you do take from day to day. Read the context or setting, and consider the citation in its relation to that. Notice the references to the word in other parts of the scripture. Notice carefully any marginal readings, especially those that give other possible translations of the passage.

Take as many weeks or months for this as it requires. When you are through you will really know something about faith.

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MATERIALISM:

In many old records and traditions are evidences that man once knew much more about faith than he does now. There are even strong hints in the Bible that our race once had much more power and experience by means of it than is even generally believed possible now.

We have several contemporaries who claim, some of them with the corroboration of competent eye-witnesses, to have contacted so-called flying saucers and even to have taken flights in them. One relates having held partly verbal and partly telepathic conversation with the operator of one of them, a young man from the Planet Venus. Among other things he says he was told that the people on that planet have learned not only to use universal forces in flight over long distances, but also how to live on the more spiritual basis of good will and constructive effort, and that they have thus reached a higher and safer civilization than we who still cling so persistently to material standards.

In various places, notably parts of Asia, we still find people who have cultivated unusual faith and possess corresponding qualities of power; but they are people who have for centuries stressed the things of the spirit. Consequently, all the older great religions have come from that part of the world, Christianity among the rest.

We of the West have lost much of this by being so materialistic. We had a nation to build, and we had to deal with material interests so much that we got the habit. The pioneers achieved wonderful things. Their descendants saw and seized the opportunity to build up great fortunes and great power. But they paid for it - we all have - out of our spiritual resources.

To be sure, we have kept a form of faith, but we have sacrificed too much of its power. We are too much like the ostrich in the Chinese proverb. It had so much zeal to run that it lost the power of flight. It gained the earth, but lost the sky. We have pretty much done that in our materialistic enthusiasm.

We need to begin to get back this depth and power of faith, but we must realize that it can be done in no quick and shallow way. As a contemporary writer has said, we must go deeper before we can go farther. Let us hope we will not fail to regain this lost ground man once held in the too little known and too little appreciated past. But if we do, we will have to stop letting material interests occupy first place and make them secondary as the Master said to do.

We have our normal material interests and physical needs. Let us maintain them decently, but let us not allow them to crowd out the eternal flowers of faith with the weeds of temporal and secondary interests.

If you allow material interests to become so dominant as to make you a materialist, they will get your life emphasis off center, blind you to all that is enduring, and gradually strangle your soul.

Normal attention to material needs in a material world is well enough, but materialism itself is the enemy of faith and all its works. See that it does not triumph in your life.

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AFFIRMATION

I seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all needful things are added to my life.

